

The Stories Of Jesus Part 3

The Leaven of the Pharisees

Matthew 16:5-12, Matthew 15:10-20

Memory Verses: Matthew 15:13-14

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Today is the 3rd week into our series on the stories of Jesus and i don't know about y'all but i just love stories.

The best storyteller I know is our missionary in Senegal uncle Josh. Uncle Josh always tells us the most crazy and unpredictable stories you have ever heard. Sometimes his stories are as innocent as one of his kids somehow managing to fall asleep on the stairs and then get trampled in the middle of the night. I think that one was true. And, sometimes he would tell us a story about how his kids were starving and the only thing to eat was our grandparents. He was always joking about eating that poor dog with teriyaki sauce. And we would just laugh and laugh. No, matter what he told us, one thing was for sure, it was bound to be a crazy and extremely confusing story that would leave us laughing and wondering what he the point of all that really was.

You know, it's kind of like how Jesus left the Pharisees when he told them stories. They would always leave shocked, confused, and upset. Why? Because the Pharisees didn't see Jesus as a friend or a leader they could follow. They saw Jesus as a threat. And why exactly was that? Because he didn't follow their rules? Yes. Because he didn't dress the part, or go through the proper religious channels? Yes. But I think the thing that really bothered them was that Jesus was giving away for free, what they had been trying to sell. Jesus was giving salvation through grace by faith, while the Pharisees were trying to sell salvation through works. And this drove them crazy. In truth the pharisees were shady used care salesmen who didn't like Jesus telling sinners that their sins could be forgiven simply by faith.

I don't think I have to expand too much on this illustration. You have all experienced or seen shady used car dealers. They have a certain reputation for not necessarily being trustworthy or the kind of people who would look out for your best interest. You may have even had an experience where you were tricked into buying a lemon from one of them? In case you aren't familiar with shady pharisee-like used car salesmen, heres a [clip](#) to illustrate.

Used car dealers in movies and in society today are viewed as shady and always up to something, like there trying to sell you a bill of goods. This is a equivalent to the pharisees in the bible. You see the pharisees and Jesus were on different sides when it came to the Gospel.

Obviously Jesus was on the right side and spoke the truth about salvation. How people could only be saved through him by faith. He spoke about the way to heaven was not an easy path, but was available to the worst sinner. However the pharisees were full of baloney. They told people that the way to heaven is by following rules and works. They told people they could save themselves through their works, when the only one who can save is Jesus. They were preaching a different Gospel, a false Gospel. They were false and arrogant teachers attempting to poison the body of Christ and Jesus couldn't allow that. So he spoke out about it.

Look with me at **Matthew 16:5-12**, "When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

It's crazy to think that the disciples thought Jesus was still talking about literal bread. They were very confused. So Jesus says, "come on guys, I can make bread any time I want as I have done with the feeding of the 4000 and the 5000. I'm not talking about literal bread. I'm talking about how the lies and false teachings of the pharisees can spread in society and more specifically in our hearts. We cannot allow it to spread.

The main point this morning is simple. **We must not allow the shady used car salesmen-like false teachers of this world to influence us towards a lemon-like Gospel!**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see here is that... **We Won't Be Fooled If We Stay Focused On Christ's Agenda**. We must stay engaged in the teaching of Christ so our agenda doesn't steer away from Christ. Again we see in the Gospel of Mark Jesus' warning of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Look with me at **Mark 8:14-21** - "Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the

five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

In this passage we see Jesus and the disciples talking together and we see Jesus told the disciples beware the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Leaven is an ingredient like yeast so when it is paired with flour and cooked in the oven it makes the bread rise and that's what gives you a nice loaf of bread. Now Jesus is warning the disciples about the lies of the Pharisees, but the disciples didn't hear what Jesus was trying to tell them. The disciples were too busy worrying about the bread instead of listening to Jesus. They thought Jesus would be upset about their poor planning not packing enough food, instead he is concerned about what their heart and mind is focused on. The disciples were distracted by worldly things like what they were going to eat next, while Jesus was concerned about spiritual things. Question, "are you more focused on worldly things or spiritual things?"

What exactly were the worldly things Jesus was hoping the disciples would not be distracted by, other than food? He mentions two. The Pharisees, and Herod. Why were the Pharisees a distraction? Because their false teaching was made up of man-made rules and a corrupted version of the law. It was a half truth that was appealing but broken. They taught that the only way to God was through a strict adherence to the law which stands at 613 strict rules. To break any of these meant you would have to be cleansed through ritual sacrifice.

The problem, of course, was that no one could keep all of these rules all of the time and thus all men were unclean, including the Pharisees. This resulted in a system where the Pharisees weren't directing people towards a love for their creator, they were directing the people towards a new form of slavery in which they were always iceskating up hill, always trying to earn their salvation through works.

He also mentions Herod. Why was Herod a distraction? Because Herod was a false king who only wanted to be entertained while he lived large off the backs of his own people. While the Pharisees presented a perversion of true religion, Herod presented an alternative; materialism. While the Pharisees' leaven was worldly penance, Herod's leaven was worldly pleasure. Both are very distracting. **It is very easy to get distracted by the bread of this world, therefore it is essential to keep our eyes on Christ.**

So, how does keeping our eyes on the agenda of Christ counter the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod? Simple, Jesus says that it's not about the rules. Rather, it's about a relationship! If you love God and put your faith in his Son, then his grace will cover over all of your sin.

Though you may accidentally sin, his grace will still cover you. And, Jesus says it's not about the pleasures of this world, but rather the abundant life that following Jesus gives. The freedom we have in salvation, is greater than all the riches of the world. And one day we will inherit Heaven. A prize far greater than anything this world can ever offer us. **We must not allow the shady used car salesman-like false teachers of this world to influence us towards a lemon-like Gospel.**

The second thing we need to see here is... **We Won't Be Fooled If We Hold Fast To Christ-like Integrity.** Jesus tells us that the Pharisees were hypocrites. Look with me at **Luke 12:1-3**; "In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops."

One of the biggest problems Jesus had with the Pharisees was that they were hypocritical. They pretended to be one thing while they were clearly something else. Look at what Jesus says to them in **Matthew 23:27-28**; "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. In the sermon on the mount he tells us how they love to pray, but only where people can see them, or they love to fast, but only to get credit from the people who notice, or they love to give to the poor, but only so people will think highly of them. They don't care what God thinks of them as much as they care what people think of them. They are pretenders. They are snake oil salesmen. They are actors.

Jesus warns us to not be like them. **We are to be true to who Jesus says we are to be. That if we claim Christ then we live lives like Christ.** And not just on Sunday's when other Christians can see us, but every second of every day! Jesus reminds the disciples. One day all will be revealed. The things you think you can hide from everyone else, God will reveal them to everyone. Then you will be found out to be a hypocrite or someone who is genuine.

How then do we live lives of Christ-like integrity? Four things. First, we must confess our sins to God and to others. Let people know what you struggle with so they will know that you are real. Secondly, we must deny temptation. Just because someone won't know doesn't mean that it's not sin. And by the way, God is always watching. Thirdly, we must remain faithful to our commitment. If you say you are going to do something, do it. And fourthly, must stay humble. Pray in secret, fast in secret, give in secret,

so that you won't get the glory here on earth.

If you've noticed, there are way too many so called "Christian" Preachers and teachers who say the right things and appear to do the right things, but are living double lives. In actuality they are all about the money, the prestige, and often the pleasures of this world. Be sure they will be found out. Don't be like them. **We must not allow the shady used car salesman-like false teachers of this world to influence us towards a lemon-like Gospel.**

The third thing we need to see today is that... **We Won't Be Fooled If We Know The Truth From A Lie.** Look at what Jesus says about the Pharisees in **Matthew 15:12-14**; "Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." Now stay with me, here are two parables within a parable. We will deal with the main parable of this passage in a second, but first let's look at what it means to be a plant that is rooted up and a blind guide which leads blind people.

Let's start with the blind who lead the blind. Jesus is stating here that the Pharisees are blind. They don't see the truth of God's kingdom or his Messiah, Jesus. Instead they can only see the law, or more specifically, their perversion of the law. And they lead blind people. The only people buying into their garbage are also either unwilling or unable to see the truth of Christ.

So, how can we know the difference between a blind leader and a real leader? Well, our first clue is that the Pharisees talked about what people wanted to hear, while Jesus talked about what people needed to hear. Finding a false leader is as easy as finding the person who tells you everything you like and everything you want to hear. The bible calls this, "tickling ears." On the contrary, not always, but often, the person telling you to repent or reminding you of what makes you contemplate your sin, and "steps on your toes" is probably more likely telling you the truth.

What made the Pharisees so bad is that they were twisting the word of God to better fit men's desires instead of God's desires. Remember how we watched that clip of the car salesman trying to sell Sam Witwicky a junky car. Well the Pharisees would do the same thing. They would talk about whatever people wanted to hear. They spoke about how people just had to follow a certain rulebook to get into heaven and their life would be a breeze. See the Pharisees weren't spreading the word of God. They were just trying to sell this idea of religion through what was comfortable for them.

These verses tell us beware of the Pharisees. Well, I don't know if any of you have noticed, but we don't really have Pharisees hanging around Danville today. But, we can still apply these verses to our daily lives. The Bible uses the Pharisees as a representation of false prophets, aka false teacher, pretend preachers, posers. They are representative of someone who claims to be a follower and teacher of Christ but isn't.

We need to watch out for people like this who might be trying to throw us off the path of God. People who might sound like they know Christ and follow him but don't. Maybe it's leaders in fringe sects like The Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints or Jehovah's Witnesses. They are similar but are not the same. You must study to show yourself approved.

Or what about those who preach the Prosperity Gospel or Extreme Charismatic Mysticism, or easy believism? Therefore we must stay alert. You must be in the word so when someone tells you something false you have the word of God to turn to. **The Bible tells us that Christ's sheep know and hear his voice! Do you know if you are following the voice of Christ or a blind guide?** In the end, Jesus will uproot these false teachers because they have poisoned his garden. He didn't plant them and he can't allow them to choke out his followers. **We must not allow the shady used car salesman-like false teachers of this world to influence us towards a lemon-like Gospel.**

Lastly, we need to see that... **We Won't Be Fooled If We Know How To Apply The Rules of God Properly.** Lastly, let's look at the primary parable of Matthew 15:10-20. We find it in **Matthew 15:10-11, 15-20**; "And he called the people to him and said to them, Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person. But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

What exactly is Jesus saying here? I believe he is saying that even though the rules of the Pharisees may be logical they are worthless if they do not apply to God's rules. Here we see that Jesus is telling the disciples a parable. Jesus says that what comes out of a person's mouth defines a person not what goes in. In this passage it says the Pharisees were offended by what Jesus said. This is because the Pharisees put in place man-made rules, not the rules of God. Jesus was teaching about the heart and mouth saying that whatever comes out of the mouth reflects what is in your heart. So it does not matter if you eat with dirty hands. What does matter is what comes out of your heart in the way of actions.

The Pharisees were all about the rules, but they weren't about the purpose behind the rules. I think we can get caught up in this too. Jesus tells us to abstain from sexual promiscuity. Many think this rule is unfair and even unnatural. Is Jesus just trying to take away our fun? I thought we were free! But we miss that this is about the heart. Jesus wants us to have a true heart for him and one day a true heart for our spouse. It's about the heart. Jesus tells us to abstain from slandering someone. Why not? Shouldn't we be able to get revenge or climb the ladder. After all we deserve it, don't we? But we miss that Jesus wants us to trust in him to avenge us or to establish us. If we do these things in the flesh our hearts aren't after him. Jesus hated unnecessary rules like washing your hands, but he loved rules that revealed one's true heart. We are fools if we just follow the rules, we are true followers if we follow the rules because our hearts are after Jesus Christ! **While many focus on the rules of man the church must be focused on a heart for God. We must not allow the shady used car salesman-like false teachers of this world to influence us towards a lemon-like Gospel.**

Application

So how do we apply this to our own life? Its simple, discernment. We won't be fooled if we can discern Christ's agenda over the agenda of false teachings. We won't be fooled if we can discern what is true integrity and not be hypocrites. We won't be fooled if we can discern the truth from a lie, and the truth tellers from the false teachers. And we won't be fooled if we can discern the difference between merely following the rules and having a heart for God.

Now, I know that's easier said than done but if we focus on what he has done and is doing for us and through us than we will find ourselves following him. And of course, this all falls under the umbrella of staying in prayer and staying in the Word. We must be in prayer for the Holy Spirit to help us discern these things. This is why it's important to check scripture for answers. It is easy to listen to a pastor on Sunday and believe everything he says but we can't just listen to pastors and believe what they are saying because that makes us a blind follower. So check for answers in Scripture. We must be studying to show ourselves approved. The more we are in prayer and in the word the more equipped we will be to deflect the lies of used car salesman-like pharisees in our lives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, steer clear of the Bobby Bolivia false profits in our lives. we see them every day and might not even know it. Sometimes its easy to spot them out and run away, but other times they are able to weasel their way into our hearts and poison us personally and the Body

of Christ. Today if you have a question about this message or the Bible in general its ok to talk with our Pastor and our deacons and other people who are christians, but the real answers come from Christ. My encouragement is that you would seek the answers in prayer and allow Christ to help you not be fooled by the leaven of the pharisees.